

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00
SAA-01 SSM-03 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
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O R 241644Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4374
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY SANA
USMISSION SINAI
USMISSION USUN NY
TREASURY DEPT WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 9349

AMMAN FOR AMB ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IS
SUBJ: WEIZMAN'S STANDING IN BEGIN GOVERNMENT

REF.: STATE 185961

1. EMBASSY WISHES TO TAKE ISSUE WITH SEVERAL STATEMENTS IN JULY 21 INTSUM CONCERNING WEIZMAN'S STANDING. WHILE BEGIN'S ANNOYANCE IS OBVIOUS WITH WHAT HE CONSIDERS TO BE WEIZMAN'S GRANDSTANDING AND WHAT HE MAY REGARD AS THE DANGEROUS GAME WEIZMAN IS PLAYING WITH SADAT, WE DO NOT AGREE THAT "WEIZMAN'S DISMISSAL OR RESIGNATION IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY LIKELY PROSPECT" (PARA 8 REFTEL). IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, THERE IS NO WAY UNDER ISRAELI LAW THAT A MINISTER CAN BE DISMISSED. THE ONLY WAY A PRIME MINISTER MAY LEGALLY REMOVE A RECALCITRANT MEMBER OF HIS GOVERNMENT IS TO TENDER HIS OWN RESIGNATION, THEREBY BRINGING DOWN THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT, AND TO ATTEMPT TO RECONSTITUTE IT MINUS THE OFFENDING OFFICIAL. GIVEN THE PANDORA'S BOX THAT SUCH A RESIGNATION COULD OPEN, BEGIN IS MOST UNLIKELY TO PURSUE THIS COURSE, EVEN IF HE WANTED TO REMOVE WEIZMAN (WHICH IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR). BEGIN HAS HAD AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO PRO-

VOKE AN OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH WEIZMAN AND CALL FOR HIS RESIGNATION, BUT HE HAS CHOSEN NOT TO. IT APPEARS THAT BEGIN AND WEIZMAN HAVE AGREED TO CONTAIN THEIR DISAGREEMENTS.

2. MOREOVER, WEIZMAN SHOWS NO SIGNS OF AN INTENTION TO REMOVE HIMSELF. HE HAS EXPLICITLY DENIED ANY SUCH INTENTION
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ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, AND THERE IS NO REASON TO DISBELIEVE HIM. EZER WEIZMAN IS STILL AN AMBITIOUS MAN WHO SINCERELY BELIEVES THAT HE HAS AN IMPORTANT AND INDEED AN INDISPENSABLE ROLE TO PLAY IN BRINGING ABOUT A PEACE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT. RESIGNATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EXCLUDE HIM FROM ANY MEANINGFUL ROLE IN THIS PROCESS. IT WOULD ALSO BE WHOLLY OUT OF CHARACTER FOR EZER TO RUN FROM A FIGHT, PARTICULARLY WITH SO WORTHY AN ADVERSARY AS SHARON, WHOSE STRIDENT ANTI-WEIZMAN CAMPAIGN BEGIN HAS NOT CHECKED.

3. WE ALSO DISAGREE STRONGLY WITH THE STATEMENT IN PARA 15 THAT "WEIZMAN'S REMOVAL... WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO CREATE A MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS" AND THAT "HIS POPULARITY... COULD VANISH QUICKLY IF HE WERE TO LOSE OFFICE." WHILE WEIZMAN MAY LACK POPULARITY WITH THE HARD-LINERS IN HERUT, HE ENJOYS GREAT POPULARITY AMONG THE POPULATION AT LARGE, PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUTH. HIS RESIGNATION UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH CLEARLY INDICATED HE WAS FORCED OUT BECAUSE OF HIS SINCERE EFFORTS TO ATTAIN PEACE WITH EGYPT IN THE FACE OF UNYIELDING INFLEXIBILITY OF BEGIN AND HIS INNER CIRCLE COULD WELL TRIGGER A MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS.

4. WEIZMAN'S REACTION IN SUCH AN EVENTUALITY IS UNPREDICTABLE. WHILE HE MIGHT, AS HE HAS SUGGESTED ON OCCASION, SIMPLY WITHDRAW FROM THE POLITICAL STAGE AND RETURN TO HIS PROFIT-ABLE BUSINESS VENTURES, HE MIGHT JUST AS LIKELY DECIDE TO LAUNCH A GUERRILLA WAR BEHIND THE LINES THAT COULD PLAY HAVOC WITH BEGIN'S CONSTITUENCY AND COULD CREATE FAR MORE TROUBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT THAN WOULD BE ALLEVIATED BY HIS DIS-APPEARANCE FROM THE CABINET.

5. THEREFORE, WHILE WE EXPECT THE BICKERING AND INFIGHTING TO CONTINUE, AND WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE UNFORSEEN, WE ANTICIPATE THAT WEIZMAN WILL REMAIN ON THE SCENE DOING BATTLE FOR MODERATION FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. LEWIS

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